

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Peregrine falcon

It was a small hole on the side of a cliff, viewable from just the right spot on a two-lane road in a far corner of North Carolina's Transylvania County – amazing that anyone had ever seen it at all, must less recognized its significance.

The only telltale markings at the sight were a pair of white streaks down the cliff face, one streaming down from the tiny cave, the other streaming down from a perch above the cave. The cave was a nesting site for peregrine falcons, the telltale white streaks trails of poop streaming down the cliff face from their nesting and perching sites. We were on the site to see if the birds that use the nest each year had successfully reproduced. Following the monitoring protocol, we watched the nest site for four hours, during which we had no glimpse of a Peregrine, adult or young. It was the fourth check of this nest this year, and by all appearances it seemed that the adults had moved on after failing to successfully reproduce.

Despite our frustration on that day, the Peregrine is a conservation success story. Peregrine falcons were one of the first species placed on the federal endangered species list, having suffered declines across their range and disappearing from the Eastern United States. The ban of DDT and similar pesticides and a successful captive breeding and release program led to the recovery of the species and its 1999 removal from the endangered species list.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.